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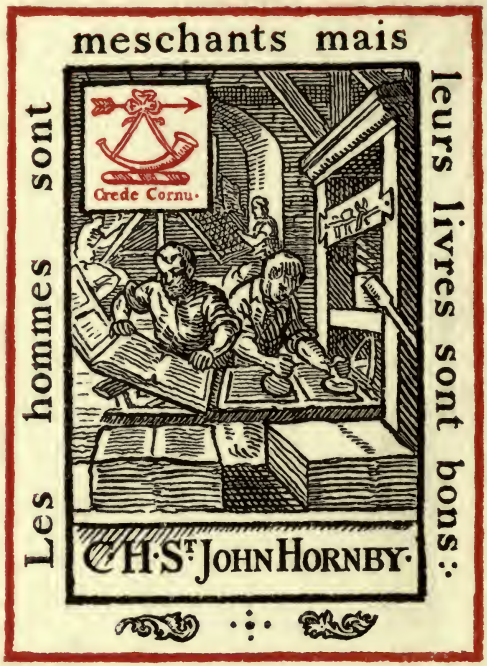
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No. 63

THE WISH.

THE WISH;

WRITTEN BY DR. WALTER POPE,

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY.

REPRINTED FROM THE FIRST EDITION,

WITH A SHORT LIFE OF THE AUTHOR BY MR.

BEVERLY CHEW.

PRINTED BY F. HOPKINS,
ON THE MARION PRESS, JAMAICA, LONG ISLAND.
MDCCCXCVII.

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THE WISH.

THE little poem here reprinted for the first time in many years seems to have escaped the notice of the editors of the numerous collections and anthologies, and to be comparatively unknown to readers of this generation. It was first printed two hundred years ago, in 1697, and passed through several editions, the third appearing in 1710.

The title of the first edition is given herewith in facsimile. It seems to have been changed to "The Old Man's Wish" in subsequent editions, and is so quoted by Benjamin Franklin in a letter to be given later.

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Dr. Walter Pope, the author of the poem, was a native of Northamptonshire, and was no relation, so far as known, to the younger and more celebrated poet of the same family name. His mother was a daughter of the Puritan divine John Dod, and John Wilkins, afterward Bishop of Chester, was his half-brother.

He was graduated from Wadham College, Oxford, in 1649,—having first entered Trinity College, Cambridge,—and was admitted to a fellowship in 1651. After holding several offices in the University of Oxford he succeeded Sir Christopher Wren as professor of Astronomy in Gresham College in 1660. In the following year he was elected Dean of Wadham College, and the degree of Doctor of Medicine was conferred upon him by the University.

He traveled extensively abroad, and was master of the French, Italian, and Spanish languages, which in turn he taught to his half-brother Wilkins. On Wilkins's elevation to the see of Chester he appointed Pope registrar of the diocese, a position which he held until his death. In 1687 he resigned his professorship, and retired to Epsom, probably

owing to a severe inflammation of the eyes from which he suffered in the preceding year.

On the 16th of November, 1693, he met with a severe calamity in the loss of all his books in a fire in Lombard Street. His later years were passed in Bunhill Fields, London, where he died at a very advanced age on the 25th of June, 1714, and was buried in St. Giles's, Cripplegate.

Anthony à Wood was rather severe in his criticisms of Dr. Pope, and accused him of leading "a heathenish and epicurean life"; but we know that this opinion was not held by many distinguished men, notably Dr. Seth Ward, with whom he lived many years, and who made him an allowance, or pension, of £100 a year. Wood's opinion of Dr. Pope's writings was naturally colored by his unfavorable view of his life, and he called them "frivolous things rather fit to be buried in oblivion with the author than to be remembered."

In addition to "The Wish," Dr. Pope wrote "Memoirs of M. Du Vall," London, 1670, and "To the Memory of the Most Renowned Du Vall," a Pindaric ode, 1671, — the person ironically cele-

brated therein was Claude Duval the highwayman,—"Select Novels from Cervantes and Petrarch," London, 1674, and "Moral and Political Fables," London, 1698.

Whatever may be the value of Anthony à Wood's low estimate of Dr. Pope's writings, it is certain that no less a person than Dr. Benjamin Franklin had a very high opinion of "The Wish," as the following extract from a letter to George Whately dated Passy, 23d May, 1785, shows.†

'I like better the concluding sentiment in the old song called "The Old Man's Wish," wherein, after wishing for a warm house in a country town, an easy horse, some good authors, ingenious and cheerful companions, a pudding on Sundays, with stout ale and a bottle of Burgundy, etc., etc., in separate stanzas each ending with this burthen,

"May I govern my passions with absolute sway,
Grow wiser and better as my strength wears away,
Without gout or stone, by a gentle decay,"

† "The Complete Works of Benjamin Franklin," compiled and edited by John Bigelow, New York, Putnam, 1888, vol. ix, p. 113.

he adds:

"With a courage undaunted may I face the last day,
And, when I am gone, may the better sort say:
'In the morning when sober, in the evening when mellow,
He's gone, and has not left behind him his fellow;
For he governed his passions,' etc."

'But what signifies our wishing? Things happen, after all, as they will happen. I have sung that *wishing song* a thousand times when I was young, and now find at fourscore that the three contraries have befallen me,— being subject to the gout and the stone, and not being yet master of all my passions.'

Joseph Ritson, in "A Select Collection of English Songs," three volumes, London, 1783, gives "The Old Man's Wish" as Song XXVIII of the second volume, but prints only the first, third, fourth, fifth, and seventeenth stanzas, together with the chorus, which is altered after the last stanza as follows.

'For he governed his passion with an absolute sway,
And grew wiser and better as his strength wore away,
Without gout or stone, by a gentle decay.'

Mr. Ritson adds a footnote that throws some light upon the date of composition of the poem, which, if he is correct, must have been during the earlier years of Dr. Pope's life.

'The author republished this song in his old age, with large additions, and a number of whimsical notes, and illustrations from the Roman, Italian, and German poets. None of his supplemental stanzas were thought properly adapted to the present publication, but all the corrections and alterations he has made in the original verses have been carefully retained; except only as to the last chorus, which does not in his enlarged copy differ from the first.'

However, the verses certainly have sufficient merit to warrant this reprint, both from a metrical and from a philosophical point of view, and it is easy to understand why honest old Ben Franklin confesses to have "sung that wishing song a thousand times." The sentiment may be "epicurean,"—and thus give some shadow of excuse for the estimate of the author's life in the "Athenæ Oxonienses,"—but no more perhaps than might be expected from one who

had survived two Revolutions, and who looked forward to an old age of peace and quiet.

The music for "The Wish," given by Ritson in his third volume, is by the celebrated composer Dr. John Blow, (1648–1708,) for many years organist of Westminster Abbey, and master of the still better known Henry Purcell, his successor. In case any of the readers of this reprint desire to follow the example of Benjamin Franklin, and *sing* "The Old Man's Wish," they are here afforded an opportunity, and "apt notes to sing withal."

It remains only to say that in this reprint the learned commentary in which the author embedded his verses has been omitted as of little or no interest to the modern reader.

BEVERLY CHEW.

NEW YORK, February, 1897.

THE

WISH.

Written by Dr. *POPE* Fellow of the ROYAL SOCIETY.

Hæc ſatis eſt orare Jovem. Hor.
nil
Divitiæ poterint regales addere majus. Id.

LONDON:

Printed in the Year MDCXCVII.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE *CHARLES* LORD *CLIFFORD*, GRANDSON AND HEIR TO *RICHARD* E. OF *BURLINGTON* AND *CORK*, AND ONE OF THE GENTLEMEN OF HIS MAJESTY'S BED-CHAMBER.

My Lord,

The Honour and Respect which I had for your Lordships Father, is not wholly unknown to you; as also, with what Condescention, Familiarity, and Kindness, he always used me. I own, those Days which I spent in his Lordship's Conversation in *France*, were without Comparison, the very best Part of my Life. I design'd to have made my Gratitude Public; and to that End, Composed a small Treatise, and Dedicated it to him, which he not only saw, but was also pleased graciously to accept: But before I could get it Printed, he died, to the great Loss of the Public, and all good Men; but to none so much as me, for my Dammage is irreparable, unless your Lordship succeeds him in his Favour to me, as you do in his Honour and Vertues, which I hope, but dare not expect.

I humbly present your Lordship with this Copy of Verses, an Earnest of something of a greater Bulk, but I dare not say of a better Composition; for if the Approbation of my Friends, has not imposed upon my Credulity, and my Taste does not deceive me, this is the most kindly, and palatable Fruit, that ever my Cultivation has produc'd: I wish it were worthy your Acceptation; however, I hope, I am excusable, having offer'd to your Lordship the best of my Substance. I conclude, begging pardon for my Presumption, and praying Heaven to continue, and increase the Felicities of your noble Family. I am, my Lord, your Lordship's most humble, and obedient Servant

W. POPE.

THE PROLOGUE TO THE WISH;

Being a Parafrase on these Verses of *Horace*.

Quid dedicatum poscit Apollinem
Vates, quid orat? de patera novum
Fundens Liquorem?

Hor. Ode 31, Lib. 1.

Me quoties reficit gelidus Digentia Rivus,
Quem Mandela bibit, Rugosus frigore Pagus.
Quid sentire putas? Quid credis Amice precari?

Id. Ep. 18, Lib. 1.

That is,

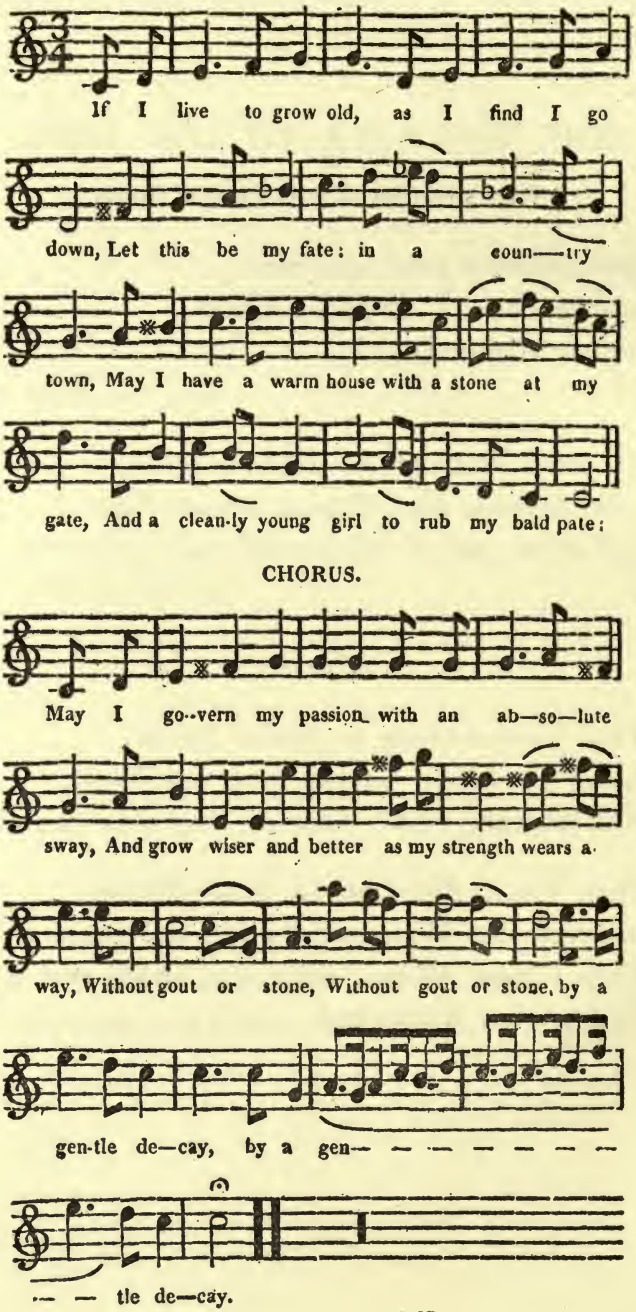
When Poets offering at *Apollo*'s Shrine,
Out of the sacred Goblets pour new Wine,
What do they wish? what do they then desire?

When I'm at *Epsom*, or on *Bansted*-Down,
Free from the Wine, and Smoak, and Noise o'th' Town,
When I those Waters drink, and breath that Air,
What are my Thoughts? what's my continual Prayer?

Song XXVIII.—*If I live to grow old, as I find I go down.*

Pope.

Set by Dr. Blow.



THE WISH.

I.

IF I live to be Old, for I find I go down,
Let this be my Fate. In a Country Town,
May I have a warm House, with a Stone at the Gate,
And a cleanly young Girl, to rub my bald Pate.

CHORUS.

May I govern my Passion with an absolute Sway,
And grow Wiser, and Better, as my Strength wears away,
Without Gout, or Stone, by a gentle decay.

II.

May my little House stand on the Side of a Hill,
With an easy Descent, to a Mead, and a Mill,
That when I've a mind, I may hear my Boy read,
In the Mill, if it rains, if it's dry, in the Mead.
May I govern, &c.

III.

Near a shady Grove, and a murmuring Brook,
With the Ocean at Distance, whereon I may look,
With a spacious Plain, without Hedge or Stile,
And an easy Pad-Nag, to ride out a Mile.
May I govern, &c.

IV.

With *Horace* and *Petrarch*, and Two or Three more
Of the best Wits in the Ages before,
With roast Mutton, rather than Ven'son or Teal,
And clean, tho' course Linnen at every Meal.
May I govern, &c.

V.

With a Pudding on Sundays, with stout humming Liquor,
And Remnants of Latin to welcome the Vicar,
With *Monte-Fiascone* or *Burgundy* Wine
To drink the Kings Health as oft as I dine.
May I govern, &c.

VI.

May my Wine be Vermillion, may my Malt-drink be pale,
In neither extream, or too mild or too stale.
In lieu of Deserts, Unwholsome and Dear,
Let *Lodi* or *Parmisan* bring up the Rear.
May I govern, &c.

VII.

Nor Tory, or Wig, Observator or Trimmer
May I be, nor against the Laws torrent a Swimmer.
May I mind what I speak, what I write, and hear read,
But with matters of State ne'er trouble my Head.
May I govern, &c.

VIII.

Let the Gods who dispose of every Kings Crown,
Whomsoever they please, set up and pull down.
Ile pay the whole Shilling impos'd on my Head,
Tho I go without Claret that Night to my Bed.
May I govern, &c.

IX.

I'll bleed without grumbling, tho' that Tax should appear
As oft as New Moons, or Weeks in a Year,
For why should I let a seditious Word fall?
Since my Lands in *Utopia* pay nothing at all.
May I govern, &c.

X.

Tho' I care not for Riches, may I not be so poor,
That the Rich without shame cannot enter my Door,
May they court my converse, may they take much delight,
My old Stories to hear in a Winters long Night.
May I govern, &c.

XI.

My small stock of Wit may I not misapply,
To flatter ill men be they never so high,
Nor mispend the few Moments I steal from the Grave,
In fawning, or cringing, like a Dog or a Slave.
May I govern, &c.

XII.

May none whom I love, to so great Riches rise
As to slight their Acquaintance, and old Friends despise.
So Low, or so High, may none of them be,
As to move either Pity, or Envy in me.
May I govern, &c.

XIII.

A Friendship I wish for, but alas tis in vain,
Joves Store-House is empty and can't it supply,
So firm, that no change of Times, Envy, or Gain,
Or Flattr'y, or Woman, should have Pow'r to unty.
May I govern, &c.

XIV.

But if Friends prove unfaithful, and Fortune a Whore,
Still may I be Virtuous, though I am Poor,
My life then, as useless, may I freely resign,
When no longer I relish, true Wit, and good Wine.
May I govern, &c.

XV.

To out live my Senses may it not be my Fate,
To be blind, to be deaf, to know nothing at all,
But rather let Death come before 'tis so late,
And while there's some Sap in it, may my Tree fall.
May I govern, &c.

XVI.

I hope I shall have no occasion to send
For Priests, or Fysicians, till I am so near mine End
That I have eat all my Bread, and drunk my last Glass,
Let them come then, and set their Seals to my Pass.
May I govern, &c.

XVII.

With a Courage undaunted, may I face my last Day,
And when I am dead may the better sort say,
In the Morning, when sober, in the Evening, when mellow,
He's gone, and left not behind him his Fellow.
May I govern, &c.

XVIII.

Without any Noise when I've pass'd o'r the Stage,
And decently acted what part Fortune gave,
And put off my Vests in a chearful Old Age,
May a few honest Fellows see me laid in my Grave.
May I govern, &c.

XIX.

I care not whether under a Turf, or a Stone,
With any Inscription upon it, or none,
If a Thousand Years hence, *Here lies* W. P.
Shall be read on my Tomb, what is it to me?
May I govern, &c.

XX.

Yet one Wish I add, for the sake of those Few
Who in reading these Lines any Pleasure shall take,
May I leave a good Fame, and a sweet smelling Name.
AMEN. Here an End of my WISHES I make.

CHORUS.

May I govern my Passion with an absolute Sway,
And grow Wiser, and Better, as my Strength wears away,
Without Gout, or Stone, by a gentle Decay.

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